

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE
WASHINGTON, DC

FSIS NOTICE

15-07

2/27/07

ALTERNATIVE METHODS FOR ENSURING 12 PERCENT LEAN TISSUE IN MEAT TRIMMINGS

I. PURPOSE

This notice informs inspection program personnel that establishments may meet the minimum 12 percent lean tissue standard in meat trimmings by either visually examining each piece of trim or by using statistically-based sampling and analytical testing methods.

II. CANCELLATION

This notice also officially cancels Meat and Poultry Inspection (MPI) Bulletin 83-53, which addresses the minimum percent lean standard.

III. BACKGROUND

Currently, inspection program personnel operate according to policy set in MPI Bulletin 83-53 (issued in 1983) which states that establishments are to examine each piece of trim in a batch to determine whether it contains the requisite amount of visible lean tissue. The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is modifying this approach so that establishments may use alternative statistically based sampling and analytical testing methods. (See [Attachment 1](#) for FSIS recommendations for the use of the methods.)

Terminology

Meat is defined in 9 CFR 301.2 as the part of the muscle of any cattle, sheep, swine, or goats which is skeletal or which is found in the tongue, diaphragm, heart, or esophagus, with or without the accompanying and overlying fat, and the portions of bone (in bone-in product such as T-bone or porterhouse steak), skin, sinew, nerve, and blood vessels which normally accompany the muscle tissue and that are not separated from it in the process of dressing. Meat does not include the muscle found in the lips, snout, or ears. Meat may not include significant portions of bone, including hard bone and related

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T/A Inspectors; TSC; Import Offices

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components, such as bone marrow, or any amount of brain, trigeminal ganglia, spinal cord, or dorsal root ganglia (DRG).

Meat trimmings are derived from the skeletal muscle of a carcass. Meat trimmings, which may be labeled as “boneless beef”, must have visible lean tissue, that is, contain at least 12 percent lean tissue. Meat from the diaphragm (i.e., from the beef plate, e.g., beef skirt steak) may be labeled as "boneless beef." Head meat and cheek meat are considered "meat"; however, they are restricted in certain products and, therefore, must be declared as such as a commodity and, thus, cannot be in a product that is declared only as "boneless beef." (This definition is derived from the following sources: the cancelled MPI Bulletin 83-53; FSIS Food Standards and Labeling Policy Book; 9 CFR 319.15; and *Guidance for Beef Grinders and Suppliers of Boneless Beef and Trim Products*, September 2002).

(Species) fat with visible lean is trimmings from meat cuts that contain less than 12 percent visible lean tissue (previously defined in MPI Bulletin 83-53).

(Species) fat is fat trimmings derived from a carcass without visible lean tissue (previously defined in MPI Bulletin 83-53).

As stated above, the longstanding FSIS policy for “meat trimmings” is that the trimmings must have at least 12 percent visible lean tissue. Trimmings containing less than 12 percent visible lean tissue are identified as “(species) fat with visible lean” or “(species) fat”.

IV. INSPECTION PROGRAM PERSONNEL RESPONSIBILITIES

If an establishment harvests meat trimmings, it has the responsibility to gather the meat trimmings in a way that ensures that the meat trimmings consistently have 12 percent lean tissue. It also has a responsibility to ensure that it is collecting meat trimmings with this level of lean. It may do so either by visual examination methods or by statistically based sampling and analytical methods. Verification that establishments are meeting this standard is not food safety and is of low priority. When inspection program personnel perform this verification procedure, they should verify that the method the establishment has in place is appropriate for determining that meat trimmings consistently have 12 percent lean tissue.

If inspection program personnel see evidence of obvious repeated incorporation of (species) fat in the materials used for making the meat trimmings, they are to notify their Front-Line Supervisor for assistance in determining whether unscheduled sampling are necessary.

Direct questions to the Technical Service Center at 1-800-233-3935.



Assistant Administrator
Office of Policy, Program, and Employee Development

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATISTICALLY BASED SAMPLING

FSIS recommends that establishments using statistically based sampling and analytical testing of an entire batch of meat trimmings to confirm that it does not contain less than 12 percent lean tissue validate the measurement protocol before using the method for routine production. Also, establishments should make periodic comparisons to the traditional visual method to ensure that meat trimmings verified by the alternative methods are in conformance with the longstanding standard of a minimum of 12 percent lean tissue. Compliance is best demonstrated by maintaining records as part of the establishment's process control documentation and labeling records. The establishment should verify its sampling and testing program quarterly.